Amendments to the Claims

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings of claims in the application.

Listing of Claims:

1. (Original) A method of identifying a fetal cell in a maternal blood sample, the method comprising detecting a maternal antibody bound to a fetal cell.

2. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the method further comprises exposing the maternal antibody bound to a fetal cell to an agent capable of forming a complex with the maternal antibody.

3. (Original) The method of claim 2, wherein the agent is detectably labelled.

4. (Original) The method of claim 3, wherein the label is used to detect the fetal cell-maternal antibody complex.

5. (Original) A method of identifying a fetal cell in a sample, the method comprising exposing cells in the sample to maternal antibodies, and detecting a maternal antibody bound to a fetal cell, wherein the maternal antibodies comprise maternally produced antibodies specific for paternally-inherited fetal antigens.

6. (Original) The method according to claim 5, wherein the maternal antibodies are prepared by a process comprising dissociation of antibodies from a complex with a soluble HLA antigen and/or an anti-idiotypic antibody.

7. (Previously presented) The method of claim 5, wherein the method further comprises exposing the maternal antibody bound to a fetal cell to an agent capable of forming a complex with the maternal antibody.

8. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 7, wherein the agent is an antibody or antibody fragment.

9. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 7, wherein the agent is a polypeptide that binds to an immunoglobulin.

10. (Original) The method of claim 9, wherein the polypeptide is selected from the group consisting of: protein A, protein G and protein L.

11. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 7, wherein the agent is detectably labelled.

12. (Original) The method of claim 11, wherein the label on the agent is used to detect the fetal cell-maternal antibody complex.

13. (Previously presented) The method according to claim12, wherein the label is selected from the group consisting of: a fluorescent label, a radioactive label, a paramagnetic particle, a chemoluminescent label, an enzymatic label~~,~~ and a label that is detectable by binding to a molecule.

14. (Original) The method of claim 13, wherein the label is a paramagnetic particle and wherein the step of detecting the fetal cell-maternal antibody complex comprises exposing the cells bound by agent-maternal antibody complexes to a magnet.

15. (Currently amended) The method according to claim 13, wherein the label is a fluorescent label and wherein the step of detecting the fetal cell-maternal antibody complex <u>comprises</u> performing fluorescence activated cell sorting.

16. (Previously presented) A method of enriching fetal cells from a maternal blood sample, the method comprising:

i) isolating a fraction comprising peripheral blood mononuclear cells from the sample;

ii) contacting the fraction with an antibody from a maternal blood sample under conditions allowing maternally produced antibodies specific for paternally-inherited fetal antigens to bind fetal cells in the fraction;

iii) contacting the fetal cells bound to maternal antibodies with an agent capable of forming a complex with maternal antibodies; and

iv) recovering fetal cells bound to agent-maternal antibody complexes.

17. (Original) The method of claim 16, wherein i) further comprises removing antibodies bound to cell surface antigens from the cells or removing antigen-antibody complexes from the cells.

18. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 16, wherein cells in the fraction comprising peripheral blood mononuclear cells are at least partially purified before being contacted with the antibody.

19. (Previously presented) The method of claim 18, wherein the fraction is depleted of a least one type of maternal cell.

20. (Previously presented) The method according to claims 16, wherein the fetal antigen-reactive antibodies obtained from the maternal blood sample are prepared by dissociation from a complex with a soluble HLA antigen and/or an anti-idiotypic antibody.

21. (Previously presented) The method according to claim16, wherein ii) and iii) of claim 16 are performed under conditions in which the complement lysis pathway does not function.

22. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 16, wherein the peripheral blood mononuclear cells are cultured *in vitro* before the fraction is contacted with maternally produced antibodies.

23. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 16, wherein the agent is bound to a detectable label or isolatable label.

24. (Previously presented) The method of claim 23, wherein the detectable label or isolatable label is selected from the group consisting of: a fluorescent label, a radioactive label, a paramagnetic particle, a chemoluminescent label, an enzymatic label, and a label that is detectable by virtue of binding to a molecule.

25. (Previously presented) The method of claim 23, wherein the step of recovering cells bound to agent-maternal antibody complexes comprises detecting the label and separating a fraction comprising the label.

26. (Original) The method according to claim 25, wherein the detectable label or isolatable label is a fluorescent label and wherein the step of recovering cells bound by agent-maternal antibody complexes comprises performing fluorescence activated cell sorting.

27. (Original) The method of claim 25, wherein the detectable label or isolatable label is a paramagnetic particle and wherein the step of recovering cells bound by agent-maternal antibody complexes comprises exposing the cells bound by agent-maternal antibody complexes to a magnet.

28. (Previously presented) The method according to claim16, wherein the agent is an antibody or fragment of an antibody.

29. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 16, wherein the agent is a polypeptide that binds to an immunoglobulin.

30. (Original) The method of claim 29, wherein the polypeptide binds to any class of human antibody.

31. (canceled)

32. (Original) A method of enriching fetal cells from a sample of cells obtained from maternal blood, the method comprising exposing cells in the sample to maternal antibodies and recovering fetal cell-maternal antibody complexes, wherein the maternal antibodies comprise maternally produced antibody specific for paternally-inherited fetal antigens.

33. (Original) The method according to claim 32, wherein the maternal antibodies are prepared by a process comprising dissociation of antibodies from a complex with a soluble HLA antigen and/or an anti-idiotypic antibody.

34. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 33 wherein the step of recovering the fetal cell-maternal antibody complexes from the sample is performed by contacting the complex with an agent capable of binding to a maternal antibody in said complex and recovering cells bound by agent-maternal antibody complexes.

Claims 35-46 (canceled)

47. (Previously presented) Isolated fetal cells obtained by a process comprising the method of claim 34.

Claims 48-57. (canceled)